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Book Reviews

Römische Charakterköpfe in Briefen vornehmlich aus Caesarischer und Traianischer Zeit. By C. BARDT. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1913. Pp. 434. M. 9.

The author-editor of this book states that there is a popular demand to know the personalities of men (and women) of antiquity. This wish of the public may not easily be realized, for though there are many highly graphic portraits, they are for the most part to be found either in poetry, or in historical works which are affected by artistic influence or tricked out with rhetoric. It is possible, however, through letters which were written without intent to influence the public to get at real personalities. In this book the editor allows letters, in German translation, to paint the personalities of the authors, and himself gives the setting for the picture.

The selection of letters is mostly made, as the title of the book indicates, from those of Cicero (and his friends), and of Pliny. Yet a certain proportion of the correspondence of Cicero is subject to the objection that the letters were written with a view to their effect on a larger or smaller public besides the addressee, and this fact does not square with the rather naïve assumption of the editor that the letters necessarily reveal the writer's private thoughts.

Cicero's lack of understanding of the weakness of his own political situation, and the defects of his good qualities are forcibly pointed out in the editor's summary, but Bardt has, apparently, no understanding of an independent politician—statesman, if you will—standing his own ground and fighting a righteous but losing battle. His comment runs thus: "Such is the end of a deeply unlucky man, doubly unlucky because not from without did ill fortune fall like a storm upon him and prove stronger than his stout heart, and because his own disposition ever drove him to undertake what he could not carry through because the frenzy which overmastered him always drove him to be willing to take on over-weighty opponents, because the ardour of his temperament ever hindered both cool calculation of the situation and right valuation of people, because his character was his fate."

Such an estimate of Cicero certainly does not portray him as an independent politician, nor as a "public" man, who, by circumstances, was forced to choose between two parties and two leaders—Caesar and Pompey—both of whom were breaking down what Cicero greatly valued, but rather as a politician in opposition, losing opposition, and therefore an "unpractical" man.

Objection may be made to the style which is rather ornate. Perhaps the rhetoric in the following passage, which describes the situation in the time of

Cicero, is pardonable in a book of popular type, but it easily leads to overstatement: "In einer Zeit ohne sittliche, religiöse, politische Ideale, in einem Staate, dessen Formen mit seinem Wesen und seinen wahren Aufgaben in lächerlichem Widerspruche standen, waren blaues Blut, rotes Gold, scharfes Eisen die Zaubermittel jedes Erfolges."

The book is very well printed, and has a register of proper names and maps. It is a historical-psychological composite sketch of several interesting personalities and is presumably intended for those who do not know Latin.

WILLIAMS COLLEGE

J. S. GALBRAITH

Selected Letters of Pliny. Edited by G. B. ALLEN. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915. Pp. 150, 12 mo.

This neat little volume was put together for the help of students preparing for Pass Moderations at Oxford. The selections accordingly fill only about fifty pages of text, and the notes are made as brief as possible. Some of them therefore lack precision of accuracy, but on the whole they are well done for their purpose. The Introduction also is ample and well written, while the letters chosen for inclusion are all among the most interesting of Pliny's compositions. The book may very reasonably find a place in school or college classes where a short selection from the *Letters* is desired.

One interesting point in Mr. Allen's discussion of the "persecution" of the Christians in Bithynia invites comment. He thinks that the testimony of the perverts from the Christian faith ought not to be accepted as evidence that the Christians had given up the Agape, but only that the witnesses themselves had done so. But Pliny says (*Ep.* x. 96) that of this class of accused persons, all of whom finally confessed that they had once been Christians, but had discontinued their affiliation, *some* had ceased to be Christians long before the investigation. This would certainly imply that others of the number were in no such good legal case, but had recently abandoned their faith, perhaps had disclaimed it this moment for the first time, under stress of the threatened punishment. The words *quod ipsum* in § 7 of course can apply only to the Agape (one would expect the plural *quae omnia*, or the like, and hardly *ipsum*, if the entire body of usages was meant to be included under the relative; *quod ipsum* must mean "which particular act," and not "which customs, innocent though they were"); and it is not reasonable to suppose that the accused would plead in extenuation that they themselves had given up the Agape after the publication of the governor's edict forbidding *hetaeriae*, if they could plead that their entire connection with the church had been surrendered before the prohibition. Evidently the witnesses who claimed *quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum* were still members of the church at the date of the edict, and therefore were competent witnesses to any action of the church at that time, and not incompetent through earlier withdrawal,